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A

# SERMON

Preach'd before the

Antient and Honourable Society

OF

Free and Accepted

# MASONS,

At the Pariſh-Church of

St. JOHN in the City of GLOUCESTER,

On FRIDAY the 27*th* of *December*.

---

By a BROTHER.

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*GLOUCESTER:*

Printed for the AUTHOR in the YEAR 1752.

TO THE

# WARDENS,

Ancient and Honourable Society

And Brethren

# MASONS,

Ancient and Honourable SOCIETY

of Free and Accepted

MASONS,

On FRIDAY the 23d of December,

Belonging to the

LODGE

REGULARLY CONSTITUTED,

BRITISH MUSEUM

(At whose Request this Discourse is publish'd)

J. M.

GLOUCESTER:

Wisheth Eternal Happiness.

TO THE

Worſhipful the MASTER,

THE

WARDENS,

And the BRETHREN,

OF THE

Antient and Honourable SOCIETY
of FREE and ACCEPTED

MASONS,

Belonging to the

LODGE at GLOUCESTER,

REGULARLY CONSTITUTED,

(At whoſe Requeſt this Diſcourſe is publiſh'd)

*J. M.*

Wiſheth Eternal Happineſs.

# To the Worshipful the MASTER, WARDENS, And BRETHREN,

I will fetch my Knowledge from afar, and will ascribe Righteousness to my Maker.

THERE is a certain Tendency towards Knowledge in every Mind. The Reason of Man is then active and fruitful, till it Pursuit of Wisdom, and fitted for generous and enlarged Ideas: It should be our Business, therefore, to find out our own peculiar Bent, and then to give it a proper Culture and Polish. For Arts and Sciences are not attained infantaneously; Reading, Contemplation, Variety of Objects, and Diversity of Conversation, are necessary rightly to inform our Judgment, and to enlarge

# JOB xxxvi. 3.

*I will fetch my Knowledge from afar, and will aſcribe Righteouſneſs to my Maker.*

THERE is a certain Tendency towards Knowledge in every Mind. The Reaſon of Man is ſtill active and fruitful, ſtill in Purſuit of Wiſdom, and fitted for generous and enlarged Ideas: It ſhould be our Buſineſs, therefore, to find out our own peculiar Bent, and *then* to give it a proper Culture and Poliſh. For Arts and Sciences are not attained inſtantaneouſly; Reading, Contemplation, Variety of Objects, and Diverſity of Converſation, are neceſſary rightly to inform our Judgment, and to enlarge

our Senſe of Things: Theſe are the Channels by which Knowledge is convey'd, by which the inward Vigour of our Souls, tho' variouſly exerted, not only forms the Hero, the Patriot, the Poet, and the Philoſopher, but alſo the Husbandman and the Mechanic: And hence ariſe true *Wiſdom*, *Strength*, and *Beauty*, in all our Deſigns. For Knowledge, and Application, or Induſtry, are like two *Parallel Lines*, they are always *progreſſive* and equidiſtant, and, tho' they are both generated by *Points*, may be potentially, tho' not practically, continued *ad infinitum*. * We find that it was ſome Centuries before the Alphabet, brought by CADMUS out of *Phœnicia* into *Greece*, conſiſting only of Sixteen Letters, was perfected into *that* of Twenty-four; and [*Acts* vii. 22. and 1 *Kings*, iv. 30.] that the *Ægyptians*, whom the Scriptures allow to be skill'd and mighty in Wiſdom, and whom prophane Authors unanimouſly teſtify to

* Herod. Lib. V.

to have been the Parents of all Philoſophical Knowledge, knew no more of Geometry than plain Meaſuring, and ſuch Rules as were in common Uſe in Life to them in particular, becauſe the Bounds of their Lands were annually diſturb'd by the overflowing of the *Nile*: Perhaps, in Time, a farther Contemplation of their Draughts and Figures help'd them to diſcover many excellent and wonderful Properties belonging to them; which Speculations were continually improving; but they were entire Strangers to thoſe more abſtruſe Theorems and analytical Methods which were afterwards known. Moſt of the *Jews*, in the Time of DAVID, and Part of SOLOMON's Reign, were ſo ignorant of the liberal Sciences, that the Building of the Temple was chiefly owing to the Skill of *Tyrian* Workmen, and in particular to the ſuperior Knowledge of a *Maſter of our Antient Fraternity*, whom SOLOMON made *Overſeer* of all the Ar-

tiſts; [2 *Chron.* ii. 14.] the Son of a Woman of the Daughters of DAN, and his Father was a Man of *Tyre*, skilful to work in Gold, in Silver, in Braſs, in Iron, in *Stone*, and in Timber; in Purple, in blue, in fine Linen and in Crimſon; alſo to grave any Manner of Graving, and to find out every Device which ſhould be put unto him. The wiſeſt of Kings was not aſhamed to receive his Aſſiſtance, to ſeek for Knowledge wherever ſhe might be found, and to make a proper Uſe and Improvement of it. And, indeed, * SOLON, PLATO, and PYTHAGORAS, and from them the Grecian Literati in general, in a great meaſure, were obliged for their Learning to **Maſonry**, and the Labours of ſome of our *Antient Brethren*. They *fetched their Knowledge from afar*, and borrowed their Philoſophy from the Inſcriptions of *Ægyptian* Co-

* Herod. Lib. I. Plutarch vit. Sol. Diſc. ſur la Myth. des Anc. pr. Ramſay, p. 16.

Columns, and the Hieroglyphical Figures of the ſacred Pillars of HERMES. And we are told * that the *Babylonians* kept their Aſtronomical Obſervations engraven on Bricks; † and DEMOCRITUS is ſaid to have tranſcribed his Moral Diſcourſes from a *Babyloniſh* Pillar; ‡ not to inſiſt upon the Uſe of thoſe which SETH (according to JOSEPHUS) erected, the one of Brick, and the other of Stone, upon which he engraved his Aſtronomical Inventions, ſo that neither Fire nor Water might conſume them, underſtanding, from a Prediction of ADAM, that there would be a general Deſtruction of all Things, once by the Violence and Multitude of Waters, and once by the Rage of Fire. Therefore, let no one ever preſume to think himſelf perfect in Wiſdom, but let us continually endeavour to attain higher Degrees, by every lawful and laudable Method, to go *Step* by *Step* in a regular Manner, and readily to make Uſe

* Plin. Lib. VII. † Clem. Alex. Lib. I. ‡ Joſeph. Lib. I.

Uſe of all thoſe Advantages the Labours and Studies of others generouſly afford us. [*Job* viii. 8. 10.] Enquire, therefore, I pray thee, of the former Age, and prepare thyſelf to the Search of of their Fathers: Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter Words out of their Heart? [*Eccleſ.* vii. 23.] I ſaid I will be wiſe, but it was far from me, that which is far off and exceeding deep who can find out? But, yet, let us uſe our Endeavours, and let nothing diſcourage us, to *fetch our Knowledge, tho' from afar*, ſtill remembring to aſcribe Righteouſneſs to our Maker.

From the Words I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

*Firſt*, That Man has a natural Right to indulge Speculation, and make Reſearches after Truth;

Under this Reſtriction, That

That, *Secondly*, we do not exerciſe ourſelves in Enquiries that ſurpaſs our Faculties, but in thoſe adapted to our Capacity;

With an Intent,

*Thirdly*, To improve, to the beſt Advantage, whatever we are capable of knowing, by aſcribing Righteouſneſs to our Maker; by joining in the Language both of Heaven and Earth, and of the whole Univerſe, which, with one common Voice, proclaim the Glory of God.

*Firſt*, &c.

God has created nothing in vain, but has eſtabliſhed the moſt exact Agreement and Fitneſs betwixt every Faculty and its Object. He has granted

ed ſomewhat to anſwer all our Paſſions. As he has created us ſubject to Hunger and Thirſt, ſo, at the ſame Time, he amply provided us wherewith to gratify theſe two Appetites. 'Tis the Nature of the Soul to think; therefore, 'tis not to be ſuppos'd that he has left this natural Paſſion, this ſtrong Deſire of Knowledge, without ſome attainable Ends: Therefore, Man has certainly a natural Right to enquire after thoſe Ends: And, upon Enquiry, we ſhall find that they are properly varied and diverſified ſo as to anſwer the various *Genii*, or Inclinations, of Men's Minds, whether they have a more peculiar Turn to the uſeful Arts, or to the more abſtracted and deep Reſearches of Learning and Science. The ſame Earth anſwers the Enquiries both of the Husbandman and Geometrician, and the ſame Heavens, thoſe of the Sailor and Aſtronomer.

Beſides, the Study and Contempla-

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tion of Truth is abſolutely neceſſary for us in this mortal State; by *this* our Hearts are improv'd, our Manners are regulated, and Society enriched. How uſeful was this to the various Nations of *Aſia* in the more early Ages of the World, and how much Reaſon have they to lament the Want of it now! *Then* they were polite and cultivated, now ignorant and barbarous. Methodical Rules of *Proportion* and Exactneſs of *Symmetry* not only ſtrongly appeared in their *Architecture*, *Painting*, and *Sculpture*, but was as viſible alſo in their Civil Affairs. And it is to Man's Diligence, and his careful Purſuit and Enquiry after Things, that we are now indebted for a thouſand Advantages that eſcaped the Diſcovery of former Ages. By *this* the Magnet directs the Sailor more ſurely, even Time itſelf is meaſured more accurately, and new Wonders are daily diſcovered, by the Help

of our Glaſſes, among God's Works in the Heavens and on the Earth. We ſhall find alſo that Providence ſeems to direct this active Principle to be continually employ'd, ſince all Contrivances are not hit upon at once; but ſome were owing to curious Searches of former Ages, ſome reſerv'd for theſe latter Times, and ſome *quæſita*, yet remain for future Generations.

[*Eccleſ.* i. 8.] But, as the Eye is not ſatisfy'd with ſeeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing, as Hunger and Thirſt, tho' they are daily gratify'd, daily return, ſo this Paſſion, this Deſire of Knowledge, tho' it is delighted with the Diſcovery of every new Truth, yet ſtill ſeems to be uneaſy after ſomewhat farther, after higher Perfection, after a happy Hereafter; that then we may be perfect in Knowledge, that then we may be fully enlightened. But to be now too cu-

curious or inquiſitive, how or after what Manner, would be vain, if not wicked; preſumptuous Enquiries often lead us into Error, bewilder, if not ruin, us; our Faculties have their proper Bounds, and God has ſaid to them as he did to the Sea, *Hitherto ſhalt thou go, and no further.* Should we once attempt to tranſgreſs this ſalutary Law, we ſhall ſoon find that [*Eccleſ.* i. 18.] in much Wiſdom is much Grief, and that he, that imprudently endeavoureth to increaſe ſuch Knowledge, increaſeth Sorrow.

We ought not therefore, *Secondly*, vainly to endeavour at Enquiries that ſurpaſs our Faculties, but rather meditate on thoſe that are adapted to our Capacity.

There ſeems to be a regular Gradation in Nature. As in Numerical Figures

gures each has a Power of filling a certain Space, and, was there to be wanting any one, the reſt could not maintain a gradual Progreſſion; ſo this is viſible alſo of the Creatures on Earth; ſome having barely Being, as Earth, Air, and Water, here theſe reſt; ſome that, beſides Being, have Life, as Vegetables, theſe are next in a regular Succeſſion; ſome that, beſides Life, have Senſe and Perception, as Brute Animals, riſing ſtill higher in Order and Proportion; ſome that, beſides Senſe, have Reaſon and Cogitation, as Men, to whom God has given the Superiority in the Animal World. The Brute Part of the Creation comes neareſt the Human, and borders upon it, and therefore they are endued with ſomething like Reaſon, tho' it does not amount to it, and *This* we uſually call Inſtinct, the Powers and Extent of which are variouſly regulated, but confined with-

in certain Bounds, beyond which it was never known to paſs. We Men are alſo under Rules and Reſtrictions; we riſe next to the Angelic Beings, Beings, perhaps, as much ſuperior to us as we are to Brutes; for naturally we know no more of, nor can comprehend properly, by the utmoſt Extent of mere Reaſon, the ſtrong Power, the real Nature, the various Offices and Appointments of even the loweſt Rank of them, which borders upon Man, than we may venture to ſuppoſe the Beaſts do of us; how much leſs of the higheſt, which may probably be exalted, as near as finite Creature can, to an infinite Deity; and then how immenſely far from fully comprehending the Eſſence and Perfection of that Deity! (*Job* iv. 18.) Behold he puts no Truſt in his Servants, and his Angels he chargeth with Folly; how much leſs on them who dwell in Houſes of Clay, whoſe

Foundation is in the Duſt, which are cruſhed before the Moth? They are deſtroy'd from Morning to Evening, they periſh for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their Excellency which is in them go away? They die even without Wiſdom. For canſt thou, by the moſt ſublime Speculations, by the moſt exalted Powers of Human Underſtanding, find out God? (*Job* xi. 7.) Canſt thou find out the Almighty to Perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell, what canſt thou know? The Meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea. (*Iſai.* xl. 22.) It is he that ſitteth upon the Circle of the Earth, and the Inhabitants thereof are as Graſhoppers, that ſtretcheth out the Heavens as a Curtain, and ſpreadeth them out as a Tent to dwell in. We muſt therefore cover our Eyes, as the Seraphims mention'd (*Iſai.* vi. 2.) by Isaiah did, before

fore his Divine Majesty. Our Curiosity must be conducted with Moderation, lest we become vain in our Imaginations, and our foolish Hearts, instead of being enlightened, be further darkened. (*Isai.* xl. 12.) For who hath measured the Water in the Hollow of his Hand? and meted out the Heaven with a Span, and comprehended the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Ballance?

The deep Things of God none but the Spirit of God has ever searched out; and tho' this Holy Spirit hath graciously afforded us Depths and hidden Treasures of Knowledge, yet its Intention seems to be this, to direct us how to proceed, and what to believe and hope for, but not entirely to lift up that Veil which deprives us of the true Knowledge of superior Things, Providence has afforded

forded us Objects enough ſuited to the Power of our Faculties, which may exerciſe all the Induſtry, and Skill, and Parts, of the moſt Learned and Wiſe, and which may make them better and more happy. Theſe then, and theſe only, let us diligently ſearch after, and let us improve, to the beſt Advantage, whatever we are capable of knowing, either by promoting our own or the general Good. Let us willingly be confin'd within this our proper *Circle*, and have Reſpect only to this uſeful *Center*. For, if we pretend to go further, and ſhould amuſe ourſelves with ſome faint Glimpſe of ſuperior Things, yet we ſhall ſoon find even that Glimpſe is but as the Lightning, no ſooner ſeen but loſt: Philoſophy is quite at a ſtand, and our Reaſonings and Reflexions quite uncertain. Thus upon this Principle, the wiſe and curious Artiſt, (allowing for the

Meanneſs of the Compariſon) when he could not draw Sorrow to the Life, draw'd it with a Veil over its Face, that Imagination might ſupply the Defects of the Pencil. And, therefore, our Conſtitutions wiſely forbid any Diſputations in every Regular Lodge about ſuch Matters, and direct only to the Contemplation of uſeful Arts and Sciences, not to purſue Studies or Speculations which may not be only barren and unfruitful, but rather dangerous and deſtructive; but that, according to the Rules of Architecture in our well-built Fabric, there ſhould be Solidity and Convenience, Order and Decorum; that we ſhould contemplate Nature and the Works of God, in order to make them ſerviceable to ourſelves and our Fellow Creatures, that we all may be more ſenſible of our Creator's Favours and Bleſſings to us.

So as, *Thirdly*, to aſcribe Righteouſneſs to our Great Bene-

factor, by joining in the Language both of Heaven and Earth, and the whole Universe, which, with one common Voice, proclaim the Glory of God.

The Soul of Man ſeems to be made, as it were, on purpoſe to contemplate the Works of God; for this End it can diſcern, think, and reaſon; therefore, both Duty and Gratitude oblige us to ſet forth the Glories of our Great Creator. This ſhould be the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End of all our Enquiries. We ſhould learn by Arithmetic, that as Numbers proceed from Unity; by Geometry, that as Magnitudes ariſe from an indiviſible Point; by Philoſophy, that as all Cauſes are owing to one firſt Cauſe; by Aſtronomy and Mechanics, that as all Motions and Movements depend upon one firſt Mover; ſo that *of all Things* there is but *One* infinitely wiſe and powerful

erful Maker, Director, and Preſerver; and conſequently, that *for all Things* we are to worſhip and to give Divine Honour but to *One God*, and to let *Glory only ſurround his great and awful Name.*

Let even the Earth teach us and the Sea declare unto us the Doctrine of Obedience; the one continually moves in its proper Orb, and the Waves of the other, tho' ſeemingly unruly, yet never paſs thoſe Bounds decreed them. [*Job* xxxvii. 9.] When out of the *South* cometh a Whirlwind, or Cold out of the *North*, when, by the Breath of God, Froſt is given, and the Breadth of the Waters is ſtraitned; or when, by watering, he wearieth the thick Cloud, let us reflect that it is turned round about by his Counſels, that they may do whatſoever he commandeth them upon the Face of the World, in the Earth, either for Correction, or for Mercy. [*Pſ.* xix. 2.] As Day unto Day uttereth

Speech, and Night unto Night sheweth Knowledge, let us admire the Majesty of God wrote in Characters of Light, and let the solemn Gloom of Darkness suggest to us that our Race will soon be run, and our Eyes clos'd in its certain Shades. [*Isai.* xl. 26.] Lift up your Eyes on high, and see who hath created these Things, that bringeth out their Host by Number, that calleth them all by their Names, by the Greatness of his Might. [*Job* xxxi. 26.] And then, when we behold the *Sun* as it shineth, or the *Moon* walking in Brightness, let not our Hearts be secretly entic'd to adore those glorious Luminaries, nor let our Mouths kiss our Hands by way of Worship. But, rather, when the *one* riseth in the *East*, and rejoiceth as a Giant to run its Course; as Men, and more particularly as **Masons**, *let us be taught to go forth to our Labour*; and, when it sets in the *West*, let us be thankful for the approaching necessary Rest, *and for those*

*Wages or Rewards we are assured of, for performing well the Duty of the Day*; and that, upon emergent Occasions, Providence has still left us the glimmering Light of the *other* to direct our Paths. Tho' we often meet with a various *Chequer* of seeming Good or Evil in this mortal State, yet let us never pretend to censure what God doth, or to amend his Work, or to advise infinite Wisdom; but, rather, to believe their Ends and Purposes are right and just; for, shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Let the Animal World and their Endowments croud in a Throng of Glories and Admiration upon our Minds; and, as to ourselves, let us, unless we will be worse than Irrationals, with DAVID, continually say, I will praise thee, O God, I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. (*Ps* cxxxix, 14.) Let even our own Inventions teach us,

let

let the *Compaſs* mark our Ways, let the *Square* direct our Actions, the *Plumb-Line* form us upright, and the *Level* moderate our Deſires, and make them *regular* and *even*. Let us often reflect to whoſe ſacred Influence all our Contrivances, all our Sciences, are primarily owing; and let us aſcribe to the Father of Lights every good and every perfect Gift, (*James* i. 17.) and offer unto him a ſolemn Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. We find that even the Light of Nature taught the wiſer Heathens this eaſy Duty. * For it is ſaid of PYTHAGORAS that he offered an Hecatomb on his finding out the Proportion of the longeſt Side of a right-angled Triangle to the other two; † and that THALES ſacrificed an Ox to the Gods, for Joy that he had hit on a Method of inſcribing a rectangled Triangle within a Circle. (*Job* xxxvi. 24, 25.) In every Thing, therefore, remember that thou magnify his Work, which

* Diog. Laer. in Pythag. † Diog. Laer. in Thal.

which Men behold. Every Man may ſee it: Men may behold it afar off. For the minuteſt Inſect may inſtruct us, even a Blade of Corn may be conſidered as a Type of our Reſurrection, (1 *Cor.* xv. 36.) for that which thou ſoweſt is not quickned except it die. Therefore, tho' our Bodies be depriv'd of Life by natural Accidents, or by the *Violence of Men*, yet we may thus aſſure ourſelves of their being rais'd again, when this Corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal ſhall put on Immortality, when the *Veil ſhall be entirely taken away*, and we ſhall ſee and conceive a new Scene of Wonders.

The moſt Learned and Studious, without this Sort of Knowledge, is only a *Naked Superficies*, is more devoid of real Wiſdom, than the moſt illiterate, upright Man, who perceives enough to be convinced (*Job* xxviii. 28.) that the Fear of the Lord is true

Wiſ-

Wiſdom, and that to depart from Evil is Underſtanding.

The Principles, upon which this Society is eſtabliſhed, the Regulations, by which it is ſupported, are founded upon this ſtrong, this laſting *Baſis*. Our Speculations hereby become more than a pleaſing Amuſement, by being alſo a mental Improvement and a practical Good to ourſelves and others. Offices of Humanity, Benevolence, and Unanimity, are not only hereby deduced, and every ſocial Purſuit not only the juſtifiable, but likewiſe the laudable, appears amongſt thoſe that are *Good Men and True*: But they continually endeavour alſo, in every Particular, and in the whole, to convince that the Works of the Lord are great, not the Atheiſt only, but all other careleſs, incurious, unthinking, Creatures of the Human Species.

Reaſon and Freedom are our own, and

and may they ever continue ſo to us! both are Privileges receiv'd from God, and therefore all our concurrent Endeavours ſhould be to make a right Uſe of them to our own Benefit, and to the Glory of him that gave them.

And let us bleſs God for our further Improvement as Chriſtians; and with our *Patron*, St. JOHN, tho' he wept much at firſt, (*Rev.* v. 4, 5.) becauſe no Man was found worthy to open and to read the Book, neither to look thereon, nor to looſe the Seven Seals thereof, let us be comforted that the Lamb of God, which is alſo call'd the Lion of the Tribe of *Juda*, the Root of DAVID, hath come forth, and prevailed to open the Book, to looſe the Seals, and to manifeſt to Men the Will of God. By which glorious Revelation, (*Iſai.* xl. 31.) they that properly wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their Strength, they ſhall mount

up with Wings as Eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint, they ſhall glorify his Name on Earth, and he will glorify them eternally in Heaven, (1 *Cor.* xiii. 12.) when we ſhall not ſee only in part, or as thro' a Glaſs darkly, (*Rev.* xxi. 23.) for in the City of the living God there is no need of the *Sun*, neither of the *Moon*, to ſhine in it, *for the Glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

*The* E N D.

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The END.